

APPROVED MINUTES
(APPROVED – SEPTEMBER 19, 2001)

MONTGOMERY COUNTY REDISTRICTING COMMISSION, 2001
MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 2001 AT 7:00 PM

5th Floor Conference Room - Council Office Building
Rockville, MD

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Shirley Small-Rougeau, Chair
Bill Sher
Jason Tai
Steve Berry
Jayne Plank
Harry Lerch
David Davidson
William Roberts

STAFF

Ralph Wilson, Council Staff
Carol Edwards, Council Staff
Pamela Zorich, Planner, Park & Planning
Ed Lattner, County Attorney's Office

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Andrew Morton

GUESTS

Dale Tibbitts, Citizen PAC
Bruce N. Deppa, Darnestown Civic Assoc.
Karl B. Hille, Reporter, Journal Newspapers
George Sauer, Republican Central Comm.
Nguyen Minh Chau, Councilmember
Town of Garrett Park
Margaret Jurgensen, Board of Elections
Peggy Erickson, Dacek Office
Joy Nurmi, Praisner Office

The meeting was called to order by Chair Rougeau at 7:00 PM.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Rougeau called for approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. After agreeing to a correction and a clarification on Plan B, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the August 6th minutes as amended. The Chair reminded the Commissioners that this was the final meeting before the public hearing. The purpose of this meeting is not only to present new plans but also to select plans that will be presented at the Commission Hearing. After the public has a chance to present its input, the Commission will make a decision as to the plan that will go forward to the Council.

Commissioner Sher asked whether there would be an opportunity for any of the Commission's plans presented to be amended after the public hearing before a decision is made. The Chair responded that there would be that opportunity particularly because there may be ideas from the public that the Commission may want to consider. Commissioner Plank asked when will the Plans be posted on the Internet (County Website). Ms. Zorich answered that the County will put the plans on the Internet once they are selected prior to the public hearing probably within a week.

At this point in the meeting the Chair asked if any guests had comments to make to the Commission. Ms. Chau, Councilmember from the Town of Garrett Park, informed the Commission that Lib Tolbert, Mayor of Barnesville asked her to convey that the two upCounty municipalities, Poolesville and Barnesville, were concerned about being split.

Presentation of Draft Plans

PLAN H

Commissioner Berry presented a new Plan H. Plan H was generated primarily because of the concern expressed by a citizen at the previous meeting about Sandy Spring, the size of District 2 and the difficulty of getting to know County Councilmembers. The goals of Plan H include: 1) respect for political subdivisions; 2) respect for communities of interest; 3) respect for incumbents; and 4) preservation of the core of existing districts.

As stated in Commissioner Berry's memo, the population in Council Districts 2 and 3 would have to be reduced while considering the criteria as mentioned above. Specifically, District 2 would have to be made smaller to make it more geographically compact. Commissioner Berry's Plan H reduces District 2 by moving 5 precincts south into Districts 1 and 4; the far western and the far eastern sides of District 2 are reduced by two and one-half precincts, creating a mirror image. As far as the population differentials, there was one change. Councilmember Andrews and Commissioner Berry had discussed Plan H and Councilmember Andrews thought it would be best if he moved precinct 4-23 which Commissioner Berry had moved from District 3 to 1, that it should stay in District 3. This would give a better percentage differential in District 3 and bring the population down in District 1. Mr. Berry reviewed the precinct shifts as listed below.

In Council District 4	from District 2 to 4	Precincts 8-06, 8-07, and part of 8-10
In Council District 1	from District 2 to 1	Precincts 3-01, 3-02, and part of 6-01
In Council District 1	from District 1 to 3	Precinct 4-23
In Council District 5	from District 1 to 5	Precincts 4-08 and 4-26
In Council District 5	from District 3 to 5	Precincts 4-15 and 4-27
In Council District 3	from District 2 to 3	Precinct 9-28

Commissioner Berry referred back to the question of defining the Greater Olney area. Plan H would separate Sandy Spring/Ashton, precincts 8-6 and 8-7, primarily on the basis of the land use planning and according to the nature of the community. Sandy Spring/Ashton are primarily rural. The land use plan in effect strictly limits growth. The core of Olney and Brookeville are characterized primarily by suburban tract housing. Mr. Berry eluded to the fact that the Post Office obviously sees the distinction of the two because they are assigned two different zip codes.

Mr. Berry indicated that in the Plan E population differentials, percentages are much lower and is intentionally unbalanced with the idea of keeping the communities together. However, he was not sure it would be appropriate to submit a plan that is intentionally unbalanced to the County Council. Plan H would be more balanced. Commissioner Sher felt that the Commission should consider the question of splitting precincts and the implications of doing so. After further discussion, Commissioner Berry decided to withdraw Plans E and F and replace them with Plan H.

Commissioner Roberts commented on Plan H. He was concerned that the Commission should either work with the Plans that it has now or was it starting with a blank slate. He feels that Plan H is a blank slate approach. He did not feel that using zip codes as a basis for shifting precincts is relative. He was also concerned that the dividing line between District 3 and District 1, which is Darnestown Road, would bifurcate Darnestown. Mr. Roberts reminded the Commission that the 1990 Redistricting Commission recommended splitting a precinct from that area and that the Darnestown community was very unhappy with the recommendation. As a result, the County Council changed the Plan that the Redistricting Commission had recommended to include the entire Darnestown community. He feels that the impact of splitting the upcounty municipalities of Poolesville and Barnesville is too radical and that it is an attempt to segregate a certain block of voters, and therefore could not agree with the Plan.

Commissioner Rougeau asked for clarification of the boundaries of Darnestown. Bruce Deppa, Chairman of the Darnestown Civic Association pointed out the boundaries on the Park and Planning Map. The boundaries appear to be Great Seneca Creek, Muddy Branch Creek to Riffleford Road down to Darnestown Road and Jones Lane.

Commissioners agreed that dividing Darnestown would be unacceptable.

PLAN I

The Chair, Ms. Small-Rougeau, presented a new Plan I, which replaces Plan G. Plan I attempts to minimize the impact of moving precincts en masse into a single district, causing a ripple effect and thereby desecrating the district into which they were moved. Plan G leaves the core of Olney together in District 2. The plan creates a split of precinct 8-10 at Old Baltimore Road from Georgia Avenue to Route 108. This split separates the portion of the precinct known as Southeast Regional Olney Civic Association (SEROCA) and the communities of the Highlands of Olney and Camelback Village. These two communities have a population of over 3000 while the southern portion is sparsely populated with less than 1000 residents. This portion

is most similar to Sandy Spring where very little or no growth is expected; both are rural in nature and are surrounded by park and recreational facilities. Plan I was designed to keep District 4 manageable in size yet balanced numerically. This configuration would enable the elected representative to regularly interact with constituents in a meaningful way. On the Western side of the County, the plan splits precinct 6-1; however, in generating this plan, the Chair was unaware of the entirety of Darnestown as viewed by the “communities of interest”. The goal of this split was to create a better balance in numbers with both the Eastern and Western sides of the County giving up territory in District 2, leaving it more balanced geographically.

Ms. Rougeau pointed out that Council Districts 2 and 3 are likely to experience the most growth in the next ten years, whereas 4 and 5 are pretty much stable.

Commissioner Plank asked if the Commission had decided how many plans to take to the public hearing, if there was a limit, or if there was a decision to withdraw any. At this point, Plans E and G were withdrawn and F was left on the table.

Commissioner Plank also inquired as to what the rationale was for the difference between Plan H and Plan I. Ms. Rougeau explained that Plan I would keep the core of Olney together. However, the Chair explained that the other option to achieve the goal of this move would have been to move 6-1 south into District 2, but considering the impact of Councilmember Dacek, she chose not to do that. This would however, have kept Darnestown intact, which is the goal of some of the other plans. Chair Rougeau asked if the Commission wanted Plan I to be taken off the table as of the August 20 meeting or could it be amended sometime before the public hearing. Another option offered was to amend Plan I and send it out to the Commission before the advertisement of the public hearing. Commissioner Roberts reiterated that the Commission had agreed that any plans recommended to be taken to the public hearing were to be presented at the August 20 meeting. Chair Rougeau then agreed to put Plan G back on the table for presentation at the public hearing and to withdraw Plan I.

Plan G was amended by moving precincts 4-15, 4-28, and 4-27 from District 3 to Council District 1. The Commissioners agreed that Plan G would become Plan J.

Commissioner Berry asked that Plan F be amended to move precinct 4-20 back from District 1 to Council District 3. The Commission agreed to this amendment and Plan F was renamed to Plan K. Plans B, D, H, J and K remained on the table.

Ms. Rougeau, asked if there were any objections from the Commissioners to the remaining five plans going forth to the Commission’s public hearing. Ms. Zorich displayed each of the plan maps including new ones as amended for the Commissioners to review.

Commissioner Berry asked for another review of Plan H and requested that the numbers be worked up by Planning Staff if there was a split (precinct 6-1) along River Road. Mr. Roberts stated that he was against bifurcating rural areas as this recommendation would do. Planning Staff confirmed that splitting 6-1 south along river Road would not yield adequate population in the southern portion due to the scarcity of housing along that corridor.

Commissioner Roberts made a motion to submit Plans B, D, J and K to the public hearing. Commissioner Plank seconded the motion and the motion was approved that Plans B, D, J and K would be presented to the Commission's public hearing on September 10.

Public Hearing Process

Council Staff Ralph Wilson, reviewed for the Commissioners a Tentative Redistricting Schedule (see schedule included in the packet). Specifically he reviewed the Commission's public hearing and final report process. Mr. Wilson reminded the Commission that it should schedule its work sessions and work toward finishing the final report to meet the Council's schedule for action on December 11. Commissioners were reminded that only one plan will be forwarded to the Council in the final report. The Commission agreed upon the following issues pertaining to the public hearing:

- It was suggested that elected officials should have the option to speak first at the hearing.
- A notice will be circulated which will notify the public that the Plans will be posted on the County's website.
- The Commission agreed to hold the record open for written comments for 5 days after the public hearing to the close of business on September 17. Carol Edwards will forward to the Commission or bring to the worksession on September 19 any written comments submitted.

Next Meeting

The next Commission meeting will be held on September 19th, at 7:00 p.m. at the Council Office Building. October 3rd will remain open if the Commission needs another worksession.

Other Business

Chair Rougeau reminded the Commissioners about the Municipal League meeting on September 20 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting place is to be determined.

Note: The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Democratic Club's will have its breakfast meeting on September 10 at 7:30 a.m. at the Original House of Pancakes on Woodmont Avenue in Bethesda.

Meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.